

[May Bailey Jackman]

Marie Carter

Anthony, N.M.

2500 Words

OLD TIMERS STORIES

May Bailey Jackman (Husband: Royal Jackman)

Interview: [May?] 30, 1937

Whenever newcomers have occasion to mention, Mrs. Royal Jackman, Mesilla Valley folks favor them with a blank stare and exclaim: "Oh, you mean, May Bailey!"

May Bailey laughed as she observed: "You can't get away from a name folks have known you by since you were a kid. My parents, Dr. and Mrs. C.A. Bailey, moved their family from Cherokee, Kansas to the Mesilla valley in 1884. At that time father was the only practicing physician between Las Cruces, New Mexico and El Paso, Texas. Dr. G.H. Bailey, father's brother, came here in the same year, But G.H. liked horticulture better than medicine so he located at Mesilla Park and started a nursery."

The Baileys lived in Old Mesilla a year-- then: "We decided to move," May Bailey explained. "Father bought a ranch over at Chamberino and put ten acres of it into grapes. The Mexicans raised the small Mission grapes but father wanted to try a larger variety so he sent to California for cuttings. Two years later his vines were bearing and when they were ready to market he had no trouble disposing of them. He expressed grapes to

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northern New Mexico and other points. Farmers didn't ship fruit in car loads like they do today. The flood waters from the Rio Grande caused us lots of worry, for the river would flood every spring. We either had to be ferried from one side to the other or ford the old stream. Prior to the building of the Elephant Butte Dam, the Rio Grande was strong, swift and very unsafe. It was always best to make sure your horse could swim before attempting to [ford?] it. Following a flood the water would stand in the 2 sloughs draw mosquitoes and start an epidemic of malaria, or as it was commonly called in the old days; chills and fever. I had it so bad that my parents sent me back home to go to school. I remained away two years. During my absence the rest of the children were so ill that my father moved the family over to La Mesa.

In recalling some of the old timers living in La Mesa, May Bailey Jackman said: Major Mossman and his family lived in La Mesa the same time we did; also the Mead Family. Meads ran a broom factory. They were the C.E. Meads. Mrs. Hatton, who became Mrs. Robert Bruce, had two sons, Bob Hatton by her first marriage and Cado Bruce by her second marriage. Cado married Eva Mossman and Bob Hatton became County Superintendent of [schools?]. Funny, Too," she laughed. "Bob held an exam' for teachers and I made out the examinations questions. I took the exam' and passed. You see, there are more ways than one, to get a school.

When asked the length of a school term in the old days, May Bailey replied: "That all depended on the amount of money the county had. I rarely ever taught less than three months in each place, sometimes, four. I usually managed to work from six to seven months out of each year. My salary was thirty dollars a month, and I never received more than forty dollars. Some of the towns had what they designated, a school house, a small one room adobe with a dirt floor, straight wooden benches and a desk for the teacher."

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Regarding her school teaching days, May Bailey explained: "You see teachers, were scarce and since I was the only one teaching in this part of the country, my services were in constant demand. As soon as I was through teaching in one community I was called to another. I first taught at La Mesa, then, my parents moved back to the ranch at Chamberino and I taught there. Vado, or Earlham, as it was called at that time, was my next 3 venture. While I was teaching at Earlham the Spanish influenza broke out and I was taken down with it. In 1890 I attended the first New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Las Cruces, when Professor Hiram Hadley was its president. The college opened in January, 1890 with thirty-five students and a faculty of eight. This institution is now located at Messilla Park. It is one of the Federal land-grant colleges provided for in the Morrill Act of Congress, July 2, 1862, and is the oldest of the State educational institutions."

In mentioning her father, May Bailey Jackman, asserted: "The year of 1890 was the sadest in my life, for the dearest father a girl ever had took pneumonia and died. Following my father's death the Mexicans crowded into our yard and between sobs repeated over and over, "Por Dios, our father has left us!" The natives were very poor in the old days. When they had money they would pay the doctor and when they didn't have money they would bring the doctor whatever they had to trade on their bill. Such as beans, fresh vegetables, eggs, chickens, chili or Mexican squash. Whether they had anything or not father took care of them just the same. We shipped father's body back to our old home for burial. And the Mexicans, poor things, whenever they'd have an attack of chills and fever they would come to our house and ask for 'quinina,' meaning quinine. Father had left a good supply so we dosed them with it as long as it lasted, and they would thank us and say: "'Muy bueno medicina!"

In referring to the Rio Grande, May Bailey, exclaimed: "That freakish river! It was the [bane?] of our lives! We were always battling that turbulent stream. It was like playing a game of construction and destruction. For as soon as our Mexicans finished a piece of work the Rio Grande would rise and distroy it. Prior to the building of the Elephant Butte Dam, our spring floods were traditional, we knew just what to expect.

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After father died I undertook to direct the construction of a dam and the Mexicans were doing their best to complete it before the flood broke. But progress was slow because the river, which was exceptionally active, seemed determined to hinder their work. To tell you I was tired would be putting it mild; I was fairly worn out, for I had been in the saddle all day, but I didn't hesitate one moment when the workmen told me that I'd have to find more men or they couldn't finish the dam."

Following a slight pause, May Bailey, resumed: "I wonder now that I wasn't afraid with night coming on and a treacherous river to ford. Bending over old Betsey, and telling her it was up to us, away we sped. We brought home the bacon though." May Bailey laughingly asserted. For when we returned from Anthony, where we found several Mexicans willing to work, we brought enough of them back to finish the dam. How that same stream factored in my romance I will tell you later," she promised.

Concerning food, May Bailey, said: "Now days people have more money but less food. In the old days we didn't run to the grocery every time we needed a loaf of bread, or phone to the grocer and have it delivered. We may have worked a little harder during the summer than women do today but it was well spent. I don't think, however, we fully appreciated

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our own work until winter, when we opened the pantry door to gaze with pride at our well stocked shelves. Row after row of canned fruits, preserves, pickles, jams and jellies. We cured our own meats; baked our own bread; we had plenty of milk, butter, eggs, turnips, sweet potatoes, chickens, turkeys and hay for the stock. In the old days we were not like grasshoppers dancing in the summer and wondering what we were going to eat in the winter. We were more like the common garden ants who work in the summer to store up food for the winter. We never bought a store cake or cookies in the old days. As for pies and doughnuts--well, I suppose you think my mother made the best pies and doughnuts you ever ate-- that's only natural." she assured me, with a laugh. "But I feel certain that you would have changed your mind if you had been lucky enough to taste my mother's doughnuts and pies."

May Bailey mentioned the price of land, "It was cheap," she said. Land sold anywhere from three dollars to twenty-five an acre. We made all of our own clothes in the old days. To go into a store and buy a ready-made dress was impossible--not to mention--no stockings at all. We had good times and I think we enjoyed ourselves just as much as the young folks do today, for we had lots of parties, picnics, barbecues, dances and ponies to ride. Our party dresses were very much like the long full dresses so popular at the present time. I recall a party I attended in Anthony at Charley Miller's house. It was a big Christmas tree party. One of the guests, who was a youth at that time, became a famous writer of western stories. His name was Eugene Manlove Rhodes."

In talking over old times May Bailey recalled a sad event. "It was a tragedy," she affirmed, quietly, "and an unsolved mystery," concerning a family by the name of Morley. Mrs. W.K. Morley came from the East, located in Chamberino and bought the Baggs' ranch. At that time it was one of the show places of the valley. The Morley family had plenty of money

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and kept a stable of fine race horses. The Morley boys, Rowland and Harold, were my pupils. One day Harold told his mother he was going for a ride. She was so used to seeing the boys come and go that I don't suppose she paid much attention to the fact that he didn't return that evening. But the following morning, when she learned he hadn't slept in his bed, she became alarmed and began to make inquiries. Feeling sorry for her, my brother, R.C. Bailey, volunteered to search for the missing boy. R.C. had been searching quite awhile and was about to return home when he was confronted by the [gruesome?] sight of Harold Morley's dead body dangling from a tree. Some of the neighbors thought it was suicide, but my brother thought otherwise, for when he found Harold his hands were tied behind him."

Returning to the subject of the Rio Grande May Bailey asserted: "I have a great deal of respect for that old river after all. For it helped Royal and me to find each other and to convince me that I was really in love. Ah, Romance! Show me the woman--young or old--who will turn her back on it. I was no exception to the rule, especially, when a certain young man who had been watching me from the office of the Santa Fe Station, approached holding his hat, (they removed them in the old days) and introduced himself as 'Royal Jackman, station agent and telegraph operator for the Santa Fe Station.' You see, I was teaching school at Anthony. The river, which had been rising for several days, was pretty high, consequently, I was marooned on its eastern bank waiting for someone to come along with a boat to ferry me to the other side. Royal, who told me later, that he had been waiting for an opportunity to serve me, offered to be my escort. Before parting he asked permission to call at my home in Chamberino; not forgetting to add the customary courtesy due parents in the old days:

" ' I shall look forward to becoming acquainted with your mother.'

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"I knew by the inflection of his voice that he expected me to repeat what he had said to mother, which I did, thereby creating a friendly feeling for Royal even before she had met him. You see, future son-in-laws weren't slow in the old days. My family liked Royal Jackman from the very beginning of our courtship, but they were often provoked at me for making him wait so long. You see, I met him in [1892?] and didn't consent to marry him till 1897."

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In recalling hot wedding day May Bailey remarked: "It would be next to impossible for me to forget my wedding day. We had planned a June wedding with a honeymoon to San Francisco. Royal had received our railroad passes and June 30, was to be our wedding day. But old man river began to rise and to widen till it was five miles from one bank to the other. Hence when our wedding day broke my husband-to-be was in Anthony staumping up and down, with a preacher at his heels. While I, the bride-to-be, was stranded on the western bank, waiting for my big brother, R.C. Bailey to launch his new boat and row me across to my waiting bridegroom. Upon reaching the eastern bank I was told that we barely had time to get married and catch our train. Then Royal asked me for my baggage; I meekly handed him a shoe box. My suitcase was in Chamberino. Suddenly the preacher cried: " 'Make haste or you'll miss that train!'"

Obeying his command we made double haste, by joining hands right there in the open, on the banks of the bonny Rio Grande. Following the ceremony three things, which I shall never forget, happened with clock-like precesion. The preacher gave us his blessing; the train signaled its approach, and an old Irish woman opened [her?] door and called out to us, but ten minutes too late:

" 'Why don't yez come into th' house an' be married loike dacent folks?"

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May Bailey Jackman was born in Cherokee, Kansas; April 17, 1871; Came to the Mesilla Valley in 1884, where she lived with her parents Dr. and Mrs. C.A. Bailey for a year; Then Dr. Bailey bought a ranch and moved his family to Chamberino; Bailey family moved to La Mesa where they remained two years; 1885--1886. During 1885--1886, May Bailey was attending school in Cherokee, Kansas, when she returned the family moved from La Mesa back to their ranch at Chamberino. Dr. and Mrs.C.A. Bailey were the parents of Pearl Bailey of Canutillo, Texas; R.C. Bailey of El Paso, Texas; 8 Blanch Bailey of El Paso; Eva Bailey (Mrs. W.H. Glenn of Glendale, California) and May Bailey, who is Mrs. Royal Jackman of Anthony, New Mexico. The Jackmans recently moved to El Paso, Texas, but still own property in Anthony. The former May Bailey became the wife of Royal Jackman in 1897. Prior to her marriage May Bailey Jackman taught school in the early days at La Mesa, Chamberino, EarlHam, (Vado) La Union, [Mesquite?] and Anthony. Mr. and Mrs. Royal Jackman are the parents of H.H. Bailey of Radium Springs, New Mexico; Winifred Dearborn Jackman, wife of A.T. Aldro [Hibbard?], prominent artist of Rockport, Mass; Alice Aldrich Jackman, wife of A.E. Nelson of El Paso, Texas; Royal Jackman, mining Engineer, employed by the [Serro?] de Pasco Copper Corporation of Peru, with headquarters in New York.